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## **Gender and Higher Education**

Research relating to gender in Higher Education has a wide range of foci, ranging from issues of student participation and achievement; curriculum and pedagogy; and the recruitment/promotion of academic staff; to engagements with the ‘genderedness’ of academic culture/ institutional life, constructions of the ‘ideal’ or typical student or academic, and the ways in which such constructions connect to wider social patterns of gendered inequality. Most research in this area is explicitly feminist in approach, and the development of the field has reflected major developments/debates in feminist social research more broadly, including the critiques of ‘second wave’ feminism by women of colour; a stress on intersectionality, and the influence of the ‘postmodern turn’, queer theory, and humanist/material approaches.

Key overarching debates in the field include the gendered impacts of globalization, the increased casualization of labour, the rising dominance of neoliberalist managerialism and the associated framing of what is seen as valuable in terms of academic work and knowledge (see e.g. Kenway and Langmead, 1998; Morley, 1999; Brooks and McKinnon, 2001; Currie et al., 2002; Davies, 2003). Researchers have explored the gendered effects and implications of these, noting that whilst some aspects of managerialist culture in HE can arguably benefit gender equality (notably increased levels of transparency and accountability in academic appointments and promotions), the increased pressure to ‘perform’ in the academic ‘marketplace’ has contributed to rising levels of stress and anxiety amongst academics, with notable class, ‘raced’ and gendered patternings (see e.g. Acker and Armenti, 2004; Hey, 2011)

In relation to student access to HE, women’s access has improved considerably across many countries in the world. In most ‘developed’ countries and those in transition, women now form a numerical majority on university campuses, although they remain a minority in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South, West and East Asia (see e.g. Leathwood and Read, 2009, Malik and Courtney 2011). Especially in the global North, women’s rising levels of success in achievement as well as participation at university has led to a media/popular concern that these trends are problematic and the academy has become – or is in danger of becoming - ‘feminised’. Historians of higher education have provided an important historical perspective to such anxieties, exploring how women’s entry into HE in the 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were often accompanied by fears of loss of status of the institutions/disciplines they were entering, and a fear of the ‘emasculatation’ of men (see Dyhouse, 2006). Feminist educationalists have pinpointed similar concerns in contemporary media/popular discourse, in particular the fear a) that women’s success means that men are inevitably ‘losing out’ and b) that higher education is (or must be) becoming less elite and prestigious.

These arguments have been widely countered by feminists, who argue firstly that there remain considerable gender imbalances in terms of participation and success in many countries and type of institution across the world (see Leathwood and Read, 2009). For example, Pereira (2007) argues that issues of prejudice and sexual harassment contribute to high rates of dropout for women students in Nigeria (between a third and two thirds in some disciplines/institutions). Importantly, issues relating to sexual harassment and violence against women on campus remain a pressing concern in many countries (see e.g. Phipps and Smith, 2012).

Patterns of participation and success also vary hugely by discipline (see e.g. Torres, 2012 in relation to STEM). Furthermore, simplistic binary comparisons between men and women students masks considerably higher disparities of access and achievement in relation to social class, 'race'/ethnicity, dis/ability, sexuality and age (Mirza, 2005; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006) with intersectional studies on non-participant, student and staff experience an important strand of research (see e.g. Archer and Hutchings 2000; Cole and Ahmadi, 2003; David et al., 2003; Quinn, 2003; Reay et al., 2005, 2010; Cortes Santiago et al., 2010; Taylor and Falconer, 2016).

Such research counters the 'feminization' argument through an exploration of the continued ways in which gender infuses academic cultural practices in the academy. For example, researchers have explored gendered cultural issues underpinning continued inequities in levels of senior academic appointments and conceptions of leadership (e.g. Blackmore, 2014; Morley 2014), in applications for research funding (see e.g. Wenneras and Wold, 1997; Leberman et al., 2016); and practices of speaking, writing and 'presentation of self' (Grant and Knowles, 2000; Francis et al., 2001; Jackson and Dempster, 2009). Finally, a notable area of research involves the exploration of gendered discourses in knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy (e.g. Burke and Crozier, 2014), including the enormous possibilities and institutional challenge of Women's Studies as a subject, and the continued impact of academic feminism across the disciplines (Coate, 2006; David, 2014).

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